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CATHOLICITY

IN

WESTCHESTER COUNTY,

NEW YORK.



Seventeen Hundred and Eighty One.

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CATHOLICITY
IN
WESTCHESTER, N. Y.,
AND
HISTORY OF
ST. RAYMOND'S CHURCH,

WESTCHESTER, N. Y.,

BY

REV. D. P. O'NEILL,

ASSISTANT RECTOR OF ST. RAYMOND'S;

CHAPLAIN OF THE N. Y. CATHOLIC PROTECTORY
WESTCHESTER, N. Y.



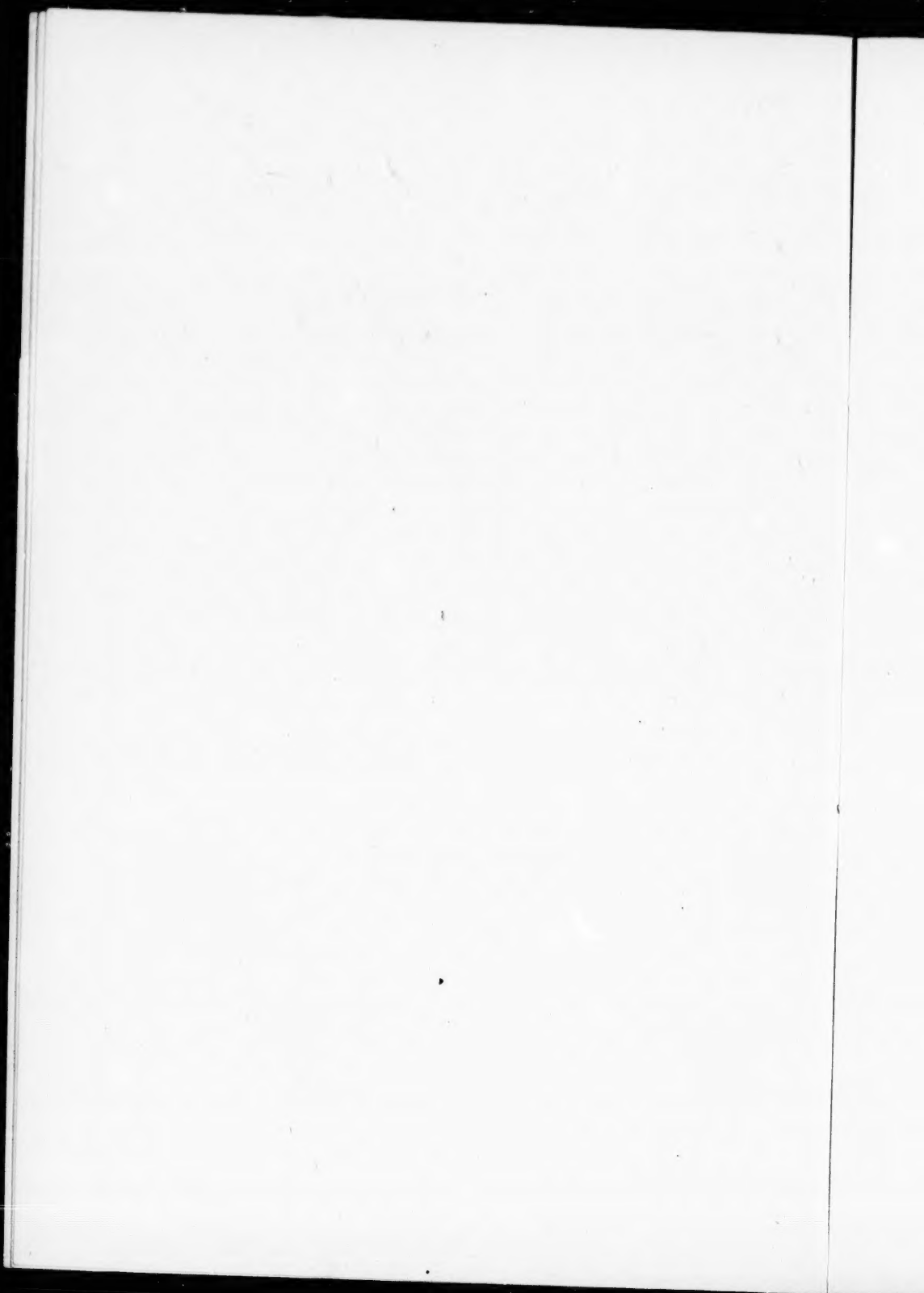
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PREFACE.

Thanks are returned to Rev. E. McKenna, pastor of St. Raymond's, to Rev. E. J. Flynn, Mount Vernon, and the N. Y. Catholic Protectory, for courtesies extended in the past. The writer is indebted for material to the State Library, Albany, N. Y.; N. Y. Historical Society, Astor and Lenox Libraries, N. Y. City. This article commemorates the advent in 1781, of a Roman Catholic priest, and 5,000 Roman Catholic French soldiers, in Westchester County, N. Y., and the Borough of the Bronx. As yet, Roman Catholics have done little or nothing to keep alive the memory of an event so important in the history of the county, and our Church. That public spirited and patriotic organization, the Sons of the Revolution, in gratitude for French aid, 1776-1782, are erecting tablets, printing old records; thereby showing their appreciation of the services rendered by France to the United States during the Revolutionary period. All honor to these "worthy sons of worthy sires," generally not of our faith or Church, who are reminding the Roman Catholics of Westchester of the debt which they and the whole country owe to such Catholic heroes as Rochambeau, Viomenil, De Noailles, and Custine. Let the Roman Catholics of the Borough of the Bronx, and all Westchester Americans, irrespective of race or creed, come together and devise means for remembering in an enduring and substantial form, the heroism displayed in this region during the campaign of 1781, by Washington, the American patriots, and the French allies.

*N. Y. Catholic Protectory,
July 4th, 1890.*



CATHOLICITY IN WESTCHESTER.

May 2d, 1780, a French squadron sailing from the harbor of Brest, France, arrived at Newport, Rhode Island, July 11th, 4 p. m. This fleet, commanded by Admiral De Ternay, carried 5,088 troops and the Count Rochambeau, who, with these soldiers, at the command of Louis XVI., came over from France to aid Washington and the Americans in their struggle for Independence. Washington, then in New Jersey with the army, sent General Heath as his representative to welcome the French allies, and see that they were properly received and entertained by the local authorities and citizens.

The French Army disembarked on the 13th, 14th, and 15th of July, 1780, and took up quarters in a camp marked out for it, between Pawtuxit Avenue and North Street, Newport. July 13th, Rochambeau opened military hospitals for the reception of eight hundred sick soldiers in Providence College, Presbyterian Church, 395 New Lane, and at Mrs. Hopkin's, 195 Mill Street. July 18th, the French commander visited the sick interned in the Presbyterian Church, called again on the 22d, and heard Mass there. The Abbé Glesnon, chief hospital chaplain, was assisted in the discharge of clerical duty by the Abbé Lacy, an Irish priest, who in September and October, 1782, ministered to the Roman Catholics in Westchester County, New York. July 25th, 26th, Sir Henry Clinton and

Admiral Arbuthnot collected a fleet and eight thousand men at New York for an attack upon the French at Newport. This expedition sailed up Long Island Sound as far as Huntington, L. I., and then returned to New York. July 29th, a delegation of twenty-four Iroquois Indians from Albany, New York, visited the camp, had an interview with Rochambeau, and expressed a desire to hear Mass. The request was granted. This band came at the suggestion of General Schuyler, who was anxious for an alliance between the Americans and Iroquois. They were well disposed toward the French, especially M. de Vandreuil, the last French Governor General of Canada, who made them a present of a gold crucifix and watch. They left for Albany on the 2d of September, more than ever inclined to cultivate friendly relations with the Americans. Later on, in September, 1780, another Indian committee from Maine asked for a resident priest. De Ternay selected one of the naval chaplains, a Capuchin father, to work in a field where the harvest was great and the laborers few. In less than three months the influence of the French camp in behalf of Catholicity was felt for hundreds of miles around : as far north as Albany, New York, in the forests and backwoods of Maine. September 24th, the military and naval commanders returned from their first conference at Hartford, Connecticut, with Washington, Hamilton, and Lafayette. The French were delighted with Washington, and the Americans more than pleased with the urbanity, military accomplishments, and dignified bearing of the French officers. Admiral De Ternay, commander of the naval forces, died in Newport, December 15th, of typhoid fever. On the following day a

solemn Mass of Requiem was sung for the repose of his soul, and he was buried in Trinity churchyard with all the honors of war.

A spectator thus describes his interment: "The coffin was preceded by twelve priests, and as the funeral was at twilight, with lighted torches in their hands, around the grave, they chanted the Roman Catholic service, and performed all the rites of the Roman Catholic Church with a genuine feeling of sadness naturally awakened by the ability and virtues of the dead." March 6th, 1781, Washington made his first formal visit to the camp, and received the honors usually accorded a royal prince or marshal of France. April, 1781, M. de Jansecourt organized a French masonic lodge in Newport. The names of those who joined have been published, and from this record it would appear that Freemasonry made but little progress among the officers or soldiers. May 8th, 1781, the frigate *Concorde* arrived in Boston, bringing the Abbé Robin and despatches from the French government recommending a forward movement against the English by land and sea, and a union of the French and American forces, the latter then encamped in and around West Point, N. Y. Rochambeau notified Washington, who on May 22d met the French leader at Hartford, where they held a council of war. An attack on New York City by way of Westchester or Staten Island was ordered, and in case of failure, the seat of war was to be transferred to Virginia. June 9th, 5 a. m., the French Army, accompanied by a chaplain, the Abbé Robin, began its forward march of 215 miles from Newport to New York. They remained at Providence from the 11th to the 18th, waiting for horses and oxen to draw the artillery, provision, and ambulance wagons. Hartford

was reached on the 22d, and after a rest of two days the French pushed on to Bedford, Westchester County, New York, which they entered on Sunday evening, July 1st, 1781. In the meantime Gen. Lincoln, on Sunday, July 1st, with 800 Americans in 50 boats, dropped down the Hudson River on the east side to Dobbs Ferry, landed there, and on July 3d, this division formed the advanced guard of the American Army at Kingsbridge. Monday, July 2d, 3 a. m., Washington followed from Peekskill on the Westchester-Hudson River road, reaching Valentine Hill at sunrise, Tuesday, July 3d, 1781. The united forces of De Lauzun, Waterbury, and Sheldon made a forced march of twenty-eight miles from Bedford to Eastchester, Mount Vernon, hoping to capture or destroy the loyalist regiment of De Lancey, then supposed to be at Morrisania. Rochambeau, with his regiments, brought up the rear, at North Castle, northeast of White Plains.

Such was the disposition of the allied forces in the attack of Tuesday, July 3d, 1781, upon the British posts at Kingsbridge. The attempt to capture New York was frustrated by a party of Hessians looking for companions, who the day before ventured up to Yonkers for a supply of hay. They discovered the Americans at Kingsbridge, supported De Lancey at Williamsbridge, rescued their comrades at Van Courtlandt, gave the alarm to the N. Y. garrison, and retreated within the fortifications at the upper end of New York Island. Washington, after reconnoitering the enemy's outposts, 3 p. m., returned to Valentine Hill; and at 8 p. m., Tuesday, July 3d, 1781, sent a dispatch from that place to Rochambeau, announcing the result of the skirmish. Washington celebrated Wed-

nesday, July 4th, 1781, by marching from Valentine Hill to the camp at Dobbs Ferry, on the Hudson. De Lauzun made his way to Chatterton Hill, White Plains, and Rochambeau bivouacked at North Castle. The French suffered severely from the intense heat, and 400 were sun-struck, Friday, July 6th, on the march from North Castle to their encampment on the east of the American line at Dobbs Ferry. The labors of the chaplain, the Abbé Robin, in the military hospitals, must have been trying and arduous. An hospital for the French was first established at North Castle, afterwards transferred three miles to the west of White Plains, and finally located in St. Peter's P. E. Church, Peekskill. Washington and Luzerne, the French minister, reviewed the army: the former, on Sunday, the 8th; the latter, on Tuesday, the 10th. Another attack on the English, ordered for Saturday, the 14th, 5 p. m., was deferred on account of bad weather and an attempt of English war vessels at Tarrytown to destroy two American boats laden with war supplies. On the 18th, Dumas, a French engineer, carefully explored the country between the opposing armies, while at the same time Washington and Rochambeau crossed the Hudson River to the Palisades, thereby obtaining a good view of the enemy's position in New York City, on the east side of the Hudson River. Saturday, July 21st, 8 p. m., the Americans were again in the field. Generals Lincoln and Howe led the divisions on the east side of the Hudson River; Waterbury, with Sheldon's cavalry and the Connecticut infantry, advanced against the loyalists on Throgg's Neck, Westchester Town, while De Chastellux and De Lauzun bore down on De Lancey at Morrisania. The American and French forces formed a junction on

Valentine Hill at daybreak, Sunday, July 22d, 1781, and at 5 a. m. were in battle array, the line of battle extending from Kingsbridge to De Lancey's Mills, West Farms.

The Americans and French crossed the Harlem River and Spuyten Duyvil Creek to Manhattan Island, under a heavy fire from the English war-ships, artillery, and infantry. American coolness and bravery under these trying circumstances elicited the admiration and praise of the French officers and soldiers, who now, for the first time during the campaign, had an opportunity of seeing the American soldier engaged in real warfare. Some of the French engaged in expelling the loyalists from Throgg's Neck and Morrisania plundered the inhabitants, for which offense they were by command of their officers afterwards flogged. The following letter, published in Rivington's *Royalist N. Y. Magazine*, Monday, July 30th, 1781, from a loyalist mother living at Morrisania to her son, an English officer in the city, pays a high tribute to the French officers, who rescued herself and four daughters from the hands of brutal Swiss mercenaries.

"MY DEAR SON:—

"The ill treatment we poor women received from Swiss soldiers in particular, encouraged by their guides, beggars description. The French, whom we feared most, were the only persons who treated us like human beings; their officers behaved well, and protected those about them more than could be expected. Should any of them fall into your hands, use them well." Monday, 5 a. m., July 23d, Washington, Rochambeau, and a company of engineers rode to the end of Throgg's Neck, Westchester Town, for the

purpose of measuring the distance to Long Island, with the intention of afterwards using these calculations in future military operations. The distinguished party left the town at 6 p. m., rode back to Dobbs Ferry, where they found the rest of the forces back in quarters after campaigning for forty-eight hours in and around the Harlem River, Spuyten Duyvil Creek, and Long Island Sound. Sunday, Aug. 19th, the army faced about, marching north to King's Ferry, Verplancks Point. The Americans crossed the Hudson from that place to Stony Point, Haverstraw, Monday, Aug. 20th, 10 a. m. ; the French from Wednesday, Aug. 22d, to Sunday, Aug. 26th. Sunday, Aug. 26th, the army was on its way to Yorktown, Virginia, where, in conjunction with the French fleet under Du Grasse, it secured American Independence, and ended the War of the Revolution by forcing Cornwallis to surrender. A word about Abbé Robin, chaplain of the French forces in Westchester, July and August, 1781.

In 1783, he published a book in Philadelphia, entitled "*Nouveau Voyage, D. L' Amerique, Septentrionale, in L' anne 1781.*" Par M. L. Abbé Robin A Philadelphia et se trouve a Paris, MDCCLXXXIII. A Dutch translation, "*Nieuwe Reize door Nord America,*" was issued in Amsterdam, 1782. The English version made its appearance in Philadelphia, 1783, under the title of "*New Travels Through North America,*" in a series of letters. Exhibiting the history of the victorious campaign of the allied armies under his excellency, General Washington, and the Count De Rochambeau, in the year 1781, Philadelphia, printed and sold for two-thirds of a dollar, by Robert Bell, in Third Street,

MDCCLXXXIII. A translation was also printed in Boston, 1784, by E. E. Powars and N. Willis for E. Battelle, to be sold by him at his book store, State Street, MDCCLXXXIV. Copies of the first French edition and of the English and Dutch translations are to be found in the Astor and Lenox libraries, New York. The narrative of the Abbé is of greatest interest to Westchester Roman Catholics, because it contains three letters, dated Monday, July 30th, Saturday, August 4th, Wednesday, August 15th, 1781, from the French camp at Phillipsburg, between White Plains and Dobbs Ferry. These epistles are, as far as we know, the first literary effort of any Roman Catholic priest in Westchester County, New York. Unfortunately the Abbé makes no mention of his priestly work here; but De Courcey, in his "History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States," p. 54, speaks of the effect the presence of the army chaplains had upon the Catholics then to be found in different sections of the country. "The march of Rochambeau's army through several states, where Mass had never before been said, brought to light Roman Catholics in many places where they were not known to exist; and the army chaplains were often surrounded by the descendants of Irishmen or Acadians who now saw a priest for the first time, and implored them to stay." During his stay in Westchester, from Monday, July 2d, to Saturday, August 25th, 1781, the Abbé officiated on Tompkins Farm, French Hill, Yorktown, at Unionville, Pleasantville, and North Castle, the latter districts now attended by the French Dominican Fathers, Sherman Park. Rochambeau's headquarters were at Hartsdale, and it is more than likely that the Abbé held religious services there on Sunday, July 9th, 16th, 30th;

August 5th, 12th, 19th ; possibly near Valentine Hill, Sunday, July 22d ; and at Stony Point, Haverstraw, August 26th, 1781. July, 1782, the French broke camp in Virginia, marching northward through Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Jersey, to Haverstraw ; sailing from Haverstraw across the Hudson to Peekskill, from Peekskill to Crompond, northern Westchester, where they encamped from September 14th to Oct. 23d, 1782.

The following memorandum, dated July 18th, 1782, is to be found on page 165 in the Diary of Claude Blanchard, Commissary General of the French Army. "On the 18th we came to Dumfries, Virginia. I was lodged in the house of an Irishwoman, twenty-six years old. In the evening I introduced her to one of her fellow-countrymen, an Irish priest, the Abbé Lacy, the chaplain of our hospital, whom she received very well." Later on Blanchard tells us that on the journey from Philadelphia to New York, the Abbé Lacy acted as interpreter for the French who could not speak English, and that one hundred sick soldiers were brought from Haverstraw to Peekskill, and placed in St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church, converted into an hospital during the Revolutionary War. The Abbé Lacy, and probably the Abbé Glesnon, ministered from Sept. 14th to Oct. 23d, 1782, to the same people, and in the same places, as their predecessor, the Abbé Robin, in 1781. The French, on Oct. 23d, 1782, departed from Westchester for Boston, taking the overland route ; sailed from that port Dec. 24th, 1782, and after an absence of two years and eight months in America, landed in France, May 17th, 1783. As an appendix to this article, we submit to the inspection of the reader, the letters of the Abbé Robin, composed Monday, July 30th, Saturday, Aug. 4th, and Wednesday, Aug. 15th, 1781, in Westchester County, New York.

LETTERS OF THE ABBÉ ROBIN.

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LETTER II. The author joins the French Army at Providence.—Description of Providence.—Roger Williams, its founder.—Fatigues of a military life.—Remarks on the dress, fashions, and food of the Americans.—Ignorance of the people of Connecticut in point of making bread.—Their temper, peculiarities and character.—The soil and face of the country.—Hartford.—The forests and several kinds of trees.—State of New York.—Hudson's River.—Devastations occasioned by the war.—Camp at Phillipsburg, July 30th, 1781.

I found the army at Providence, encamped on a rising ground. This is a considerable town, and pretty well peopled; some of the houses are built of brick and others of wood, it is situated at the mouth of the river Pautuxit, at the bottom of a bay between the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. This situation affords it a gainful commerce in corn, maize, lumber, and salt provisions for the West India Islands; there are also many vessels built here. This town is the capital of a colony of the same name, Providence Plantation, now incorporated with the State of Rhode Island. A certain person name Roger Williams, a minister in Massachusetts Bay, who had been banished by the magistrates for preaching new doctrines, retired to this place with his followers, and founded a colony, giving it the name of Providence, in order to preserve to posterity the remembrance of the odious treatment he had experienced. He lived there forty years in solitude, wholly taken up with improving this infant settlement and instructing the Indians. He also wrote some pieces against the principles and practices of the Quakers, and in the end, his regular manner of life and benevolent conduct forced his enemies to repent of the insults they had offered him. And thus you see, sir, the annals of the New World furnish examples of an intolerant spirit amongst a people who have upon almost every other occasion shown themselves the greatest enemies to it. How different are the objects that now surround me from those which have hitherto taken up my time and attention! Bred up in the quiet retreat of the arts and sciences; living constantly with those who either cultivated or patronized them, and always desirous to make

them the companions of my labours and my pleasures,—what a change do I experience now when I am transported into the midst of the hurry of camps—all tumult and commotion around me—and experiencing every moment a thousand wants!

Here I am taught to fix the true value upon useful inventions, and to distinguish them from those which are only curious and whimsical. A single sheet protects me from the inclemency of the weather; and I am without books to divert my mind from the fatigues I feel. The difficulty of providing a sufficiency of carriages, and finding provision to support the horses or oxen, obliged Count Rochambeau to order that no officer should carry with him more than one hundred and fifty pounds weight, including tents, beds, etc.; and thus it happened in our long march in a country, that almost all of us were in want of some one necessary or another. I frequently write, for want of ink, with the juice of an herb. Happy if I could rest for any length of time in tranquillity; but no such thing. After two in the morning, the drum orders us universally out of our hard beds; in haste, we roll up our travelling bed furniture, mount our horses, and with the slow pace of an ambassador's train, follow the march of the foot-soldiers bending under the weight of the burden on their backs. When at length arrived at the place destined for our encampment, we have still to wait during the hottest part of the day for the baggage, before we can take any repose. The sun has even sometimes almost finished its course before our weak stomachs have begun to receive and digest the necessary food. Stretched at full length upon the ground, and panting with thirst, I have often wished, like the rich man in the Gospel, that another Lazarus would dip his finger in the water to cool my parched tongue. Our young generals, who have been bred in ease and delicacy, bore up under these fatigues with a degree of resolution that makes me blush for my weakness; whilst their tables, exhibiting at the same time abundance and frugality, invite the officers to a state of living which the want of domestics and other necessary means would render it impossible for them otherwise to enjoy. They encourage the soldiers under the severity of duty, by marching before them on foot. M. Le Vicomte de Noailles has in particular made a whole campaign on foot. What you will wonder at most is, that the French never lose their cheerfulness and gaiety in these painful and laborious marches. The Americans, whom curiosity brings by thousands to our camps, are constantly received with good humor and festivity; and our military music, of which they are extravagantly fond, is played for their diversion. At such times officers, soldiers, Americans of both sexes, all intermingle and dance together;—it is the feast of

equality, and these are the first fruits of the alliance which is, we hope, to subsist perpetually between the two nations. The fathers of the families melt at the sight of these affecting scenes; even those who, when they first heard of our marching, viewing us through the medium of prejudice and misrepresentation, had trembled for their possessions and their lives. Their newspapers during all our march have never failed to do justice to the discipline of our army. The soldier inebriated with joy forgets the fatigues of the morning, nor makes himself wretched by anticipating those of to-morrow. These Americans being yet in the stage of their national growth, wherein the distinctions of birth and rank are scarcely known, consider the soldier and officer in the same point of view, and often ask the latter what his trade was in his own country, not being able to conceive that the occupation of a soldier may be fixed and permanent as any trade whatever. M. Le Marquis de Lafayette is universally known to the Americans by his title of Marquis. The appellation of brother, given some of them by the Marquis, excited their curiosity and respect to a great degree; and the young American ladies have always considered it as one of their greatest honors, to have danced with that nobleman. Whatever may be the success of this army, it will always retain the glory of having made the most lasting impression in these countries, and rendered the memory of the French name dear and precious to all—an achievement more flattering to true ambition, and perhaps more difficult to accomplish than gaining battles or spreading universal conquest. Before I arrived here, I had no expectations of discovering the traces of the French modes and fashions in the midst of the wilds and forests of America. The head-dresses of all the women, except Quakers, are high-spreading and decked profusely with our gauzes; and here I cannot but reflect upon the oddness of their taste, when I find through the whole state of Connecticut so prevailing an inclination for dress, I may say to a degree of extravagance, with manners at the same time so simple and so pure as to resemble those of the ancient patriarchal age. Pulse, Indian corn, and milk are their most common kinds of food. They use, also, much tea, and this sober infusion constitutes the chief pleasure of their lives. There is not a single person to be found who does not drink it out of China cups and saucers; and upon your entering a house, the greatest mark of civility and welcome they can show you, is to invite you to drink it with them. In countries where the inhabitants live upon foods and drinks of the most substantial kind, it may be useful to the health; but I believe it is prejudicial in those where they subsist mostly on vegetables and milk, especially when the soil, yet too

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much shaded by the woods, makes them the less nourishing; and perhaps this may be one of the causes that, with a robust and healthy constitution, their lives here are much shorter than those of the inhabitants of other countries. The loss of their teeth is also attributed to the too frequent use of tea. The women, who are commonly very handsome, are often at eighteen or twenty years of age entirely deprived of this most precious ornament; though I am of opinion that this premature decay may be rather the effect of warm bread: for the English, the French, and the Dutch, who are great tea-drinkers, preserve their teeth sound a long time. The inhabitants of Connecticut, who raise such excellent corn, are, however, ignorant of the valuable art of rendering it more digestive and consequently more nourishing, by thorough fermentation and kneading. Whenever they want bread, they make a cake which they set to bake at the fire upon a thin iron plate. The French whom the war brought into America, never could accustom themselves to this kind of bread, but did their endeavor to instruct the natives how to bring it nearer to perfection. In the inns upon the road we found some tolerably good, but far inferior even to that made in our army. The inhabitants who reside at a distance from the highways, preserve their ancient customs in this and other particulars with great obstinacy, and believe no bread in the world to be better or more palatable than their own. Scattered about among the forests, the inhabitants have little intercourse with each other, except when they go to church. Their dwelling-houses are spacious, proper, airy, and built of wood, and are at least one story in height, and herein they keep all their furniture and substance. In all of them that I have seen, I never failed to discover traces of their active and inventive genius. They all know how to read; and the greatest part of them take the Gazette printed in their village, which they often dignify with the name of town or city. I do not remember ever to have entered a single house without seeing a huge family bible, out of which they read on evenings and Sundays to their households. They are of a cold, slow, and indolent disposition, and averse to labor; the soil, with a moderate village, supplying them with considerably more than they can consume. They go and return from their fields on horseback, and in all this country you will scarcely see a traveller on foot. The mildness of their character is as much owing to climate as to their customs and manners, for you find the same softness of disposition even in the animals of the country. The horses are of an excellent breed, and it is common for them to go long journeys at the rate of fifty or sixty miles a day. They are very teachable, and it is a rare thing to find any of them stubborn or skittish. The dog here is of a fawning, timid nature,

and the strangest figure of a man need not fear any violence from him. I have observed, too, by the way, that his voice is rather broken and hoarse. The Americans of these parts are very hospitable. There is here such a confidence in public virtue, that from Boston to Providence, I have often met young women travelling alone on horseback, or in small riding chairs, through the woods, even when the day was far on the decline. What history relates of the virtues of the young Lacedemonian women, is far less extraordinary. In these fortunate retreats, the father of a family sees his happiness and importance increasing with the number of his children. He is not tormented with the ambitious desire of placing them in a rank of life in which they might blush to own him as a father. Bred up under his eye, and formed by his example, they will not cover his old age with shame, nor bring those cares and vexations upon him that would sink his grey hairs with sorrow to the tomb. He no more fears this than he would a fancied indigence that might one day come upon him, wound his paternal feelings, and make his tender partner repent that she was ever the mother of children. Like him, they will bind their cares, their pleasures, and even their ambition to the sweet toils of a rural life, to the raising and multiplying their herds, and the cultivation and enlarging their fields and orchards. The American husbandmen, more simple in their manners than our peasants, have also less of their roughness and rusticity; more enlightened, they possess neither their low cunning nor dissimulation. Farther removed from luxurious arts, and less laborious, they are not so much attached to ancient usages, but are far more dexterous in inventing and perfecting whatever tends to the conveniency and comfort of life. This country is intersected with an incredible number of rivers and rivulets; but Connecticut River is the most considerable river in the whole state. The town of Hartford, situated on its banks, is the capital, and consists at present of not more than four or five hundred houses and a street two miles in length. The river is deep enough to float vessels of about one hundred and fifty tons burthen up to the town. The soil is light, except on the southern side of the river, and yet it produces maize, or Indian corn, and several other kinds of grain, in great abundance, the bread of which is much whiter than that in France, and the taste equally excellent. This was a considerable article of commerce with the West India Islands, where they nevertheless preferred our European grain, being of a more mealy substance, and keeping sweet a much longer time. The several kinds of wood here are much lighter than ours, and far less durable, as the roots are almost at the surface of the ground. The soil being new, the vegetative particles are more

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abundant near the surface, and the roots, in consequence, direct themselves horizontally, and thus they are more exposed to the impressions of heat droughts and moisture, and liable to be afflicted by the various changes of the atmosphere; and, indeed, I have remarked that the trees here almost always begin to decay at the roots. I once imagined that these antique forests, into which the arm of man had never carried the destructive strokes of the axe, would have nothing to offer to the view at every step but ancient trees, whose rugged, knotty, hollow trunks, worn by rains and frosts, supported nothing more than a dry, naked top stripped of its extended boughs. Instead of these venerable tokens of age that I looked for in the woodlands, I found everywhere the freshness and vigour of youth the most robust. The trunks, close and compact, straight, and towering into the air beyond the reach of the eye, display from the top a multitude of branches clothed with a deeper green than ours can boast of. The oak is by far the most frequent to be met with; for the tree most useful to man is the tree of climates—and I observed no less than six or seven different sorts in this country. The leaves of one sort are broad, with almost imperceptible indentings; in others, the incisions are still deeper; and in some, they are so deep that the principal fibres only remain extended. A day or two ago, I met with some oaks bearing leaves that are long and narrow, and very much resembling those of the peach tree. But the monarch of these forests is the tulip, or yellow tree; its aspiring top rises above the loftiest oaks, and its thick, extended branches project their shadow to a very great distance; its leaf, compact, smooth, and slender, is somewhat, in shape, like a man's head, with this difference: that the longest side appears to be cut transversely. Each leaf is originally folded in a particular wrapper, formed simply of two other leaves of an oval shape touching in every point of their circumference. This principal leaf afterwards separates the two others in order to expand and give room for growth, in the same manner as a young bean shoots out from between the leaves that confine it on each side. The tulip—that brilliant flower upon which our florists lavish such a profusion of toil and expense, grows to the number of thousands upon this stately tree—refreshes the eye of the American native, and perfumes the air which he breathes beneath its shade. Out of this the Indians make their canoes, or troughs, formed wholly of one piece, and in particular the English-Americans have followed their example, making some of them large enough to carry more than thirty men. The tulip-tree, being of a nature fitted to flourish in every climate, it would, I think, succeed perfectly well in France. More pleasant to the sight than the chesnut tree, and more

clean, it would form woods and avenues fully as thick and lofty, and its timber would be infinitely preferable for every kind of joiner's work. The sassafras, an aromatic shrub, is found in open places exposed to the sun; also on the sides of the highways and along the skirts of fields. Its leaf resembles that of the fig tree, but not so large or thick, and is of a paler green; it produces a small point growing in a pod milky when it is green, and of a purple color when ripe. Its odoriferous quality is resident chiefly in the bark, and particularly in that of the root; its property is sudorific. We also found on the banks of the Connecticut River a sort of rose-laurel, covered with flowers, and affording a delightful prospect to the eye. The gum tree, which we found in low interval lands, is a species of grove-laurel, the smell of which is somewhat like that of our common laurel, but more agreeable. Its fruit, much like grains of pepper, is covered with an oily substance, of which they make wax candles. The wax is drawn from the berry, and collected by boiling them in water, and these candles, when burning, emit a delightful smell. But the process is too troublesome, and the product too small, for it ever to become an object of commerce. The maple tree here, grows to a very great size, and is one of the most valuable productions of all North America. Where the sap runs, they make incisions in the body of the tree, from which a rich liquor flows out, which, when boiled down, becomes a perfect sugar, and is used as such. This tree perfectly resembles our maple in France, and yet, why is it that it has this distinct property? Can it be because it vegetates in a new soil, where the juices are in greater abundance for its nourishment; or, rather are we ignorant of the real properties of our maple. Chestnut and walnut trees are likewise very common here. The last are various in their kinds, and the difference is known by the leaf and the fruit. There is one sort, the wood of which, full of veins, makes excellent furniture, and the outside of its fruit has considerably the smell of citron; they all produce nuts, the kernel of which is not so easy to come at, and they are, besides, very hard to break. The meat is not got out of the shell but with great trouble, and by small quantities, and after all, the taste is strong and disagreeable. We also found here a kind of bunch cherry, small and somewhat bitter. The grape-vine, the culture of which they are wholly ignorant of, even in Virginia, is seen everywhere climbing and supporting itself upon the trees. I have observed two general sorts of vines in America, the fruit of one of which was of a close contexture, plump, and as large as the smaller species of plumbs; but the taste was intolerably insipid, and I do not believe that the culture of this sort would turn out to any ad-



vantage. The raisin, or fleshy part, was small, the skin hard, and the kernel large, preserving a greenish taste even when ripe. I am convinced, if this kind was cultivated with due care, it would soon come to perfection. The vines we see in France in the vineyard provinces, growing at random in hedges, without cutting or culture, are of a kind very little superior. The English have tried plantations of vines in Virginia, but never could succeed. Instead of bringing them from foreign countries and cultivating them in the manner of these countries, they should have taken such as were natural to the soil, and given them a culture suitable to the climate, and then success might be expected. The Roman Catholic priest at Baltimore, in Maryland, told me he had a vineyard of this sort, from which he had great expectations. It belongs to man to multiply, to fertilize, and bring to perfection the useful productions of the various countries of the world, by arranging the soils, directing the course of the sap, by pruning and blending the various kinds of fruit by means of engrafting. We are indebted to the experience of many ages for those happy inventions, as well as for the ornaments and opulence of our gardens and orchards. Man, we may say, is the restorer of nature; he enlivens, enriches, and beautifies it. The simple turf that bedecks the ground will only preserve its verdure in such places as he has exposed to the sun and air. The timid bird that flies from his sight; the wild beast that trembles at his approach,—dwell only in these sequestered haunts and solitary places which surround him at a remote distance.

If curiosity has sometimes urged me to penetrate far into the gloomy forests, I there no longer heard the voice, no longer traced the vestiges of animated beings, but walked only through the pathless groves and the faded ruins of the vegetable world. Saddening at this mournful silence, and the view of these lonely objects, which discovered no trace of the dominion of my own species over the wild genius of nature, I hastened to visit places and abodes better calculated to enliven and gratify the soul of sensibility. The knowledge of the birds of this country will constitute one of the most interesting parts of its natural history. I have seen in Connecticut a kind of starling, the middle part of whose wings is of a deep red; and have observed another bird of the color of those brought from the Canary Islands, but somewhat larger. What they call the Virginia nightingale, is more commonly met with as you advance to the South, but has no resemblance to ours; it is large, and its head and belly of a red like that of the bouvreuil. If nature has been more beautiful to it in respect of plumage, she has nevertheless been far from granting to it so melodious a voice as ours. The mocking-bird, almost

the size of a thrush, spotted with white and grey, has the faculty of mimicking all other birds that it hears. The humming-bird, which, they say, lives only on the juice of flowers, is common enough; but by the rapidity of its motions, there are few persons that have ever had a distinct view of it. The squirrels are of a pale, ashy grey, larger than ours, very common in the woods, and easy to be tamed. Those called flying squirrels are of a darker grey and smaller in size; their skin is large and loose, quite to the extremities of the paws, which they extend when they leap from one branch of a tree to another, and thus they are enabled to make use of a greater quantity of air to support themselves upon, as a bird does in flying. The whole country from Boston to Providence is level, and I have in this extent met with brooks which we would call rivers; their beds in these places where I have passed, looked as if they had been hollowed out of a soil of soft and spongy stone, of a green and red complexion. I met, too, with some blocks of petrified clay, inclosing pebbles or round flints, which, when struck upon, were easily loosened, and left the mark of their form therein. The whole State of Connecticut is covered with little hills, but the country is not sufficiently cleared of the wood; nor are they of such a size that we can easily determine their general directions. For the most part, we can only rank them in that class of hills which naturalists denominate secondary. They are often cut through, in order to render the descent less steep, and appear to me to be nothing but a mass of stones of different kinds and various sizes, broken and blunted. Many of them are more than a cubic foot in thickness, and some are three or four; the crevices between them being filled with a vegetable earth, that has little or no adherence to the stone. The surface of the soil is covered with the same kind of petrifications; the woods and fields abound with them throughout, and to get rid of them the inhabitants of the country either throw them in heaps, or pile them carelessly in the form of a wall, on the lines that bound their possessions. The stones, from some trials I have made upon them with aqua fortis, I find to consist of a gravelly, gritty substance, but not subject to dissolution by fire. Here is also the spat stone, ising glass quite pure, and great plenty of talc; and others of these rocks abound with ferruginous particles, upon which the loadstone acts with considerable effect. The State of New York, still more mountainous, and the territory of Phillipsburg, where we are now encamped, present the same object to our sight. So many millions of these stones lying in heaps, and scattered through the space of more than two hundred miles, are the most certain and authentic monuments of the long continuance of the waters on these countries. Torrents and rivers could never have thus

rounded, intermingled, and thrown them into heaps ; the sea alone must have separated them by slow degrees, scattered them into different parts, reunited and impressed on them these general forms by a continual attention. But, however attentively I have considered things, I have not been able to find any vestiges of animal petrifications, or of trees and shells. The North River has in and about its bed very few stones of the granite kind, but plenty of marble, freestone, and slate. As we approach toward New York between the lines of both armies, we see more and more of the sorrowful vestiges of war and desolation,—the houses plundered, ruined, abandoned, or burnt. These Americans, so soft, pacific, and benevolent by nature, are here transformed into monsters, implacable, bloody, and ravenous. Party rage has kindled a spirit of hatred between them ; they attack and rob each other by turns, destroy dwelling houses, or establish themselves therein by driving out those who had before dispossessed others. War, that terrible scourge to arts and population, is still more to the morals of a people, because a change in those for the worse is more difficult to repair.

I am, etc.

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LETTER III. Junction of the French and American Armies at Phillipsburg.—West Point.—Expedition of a party of English at Tarrytown.—Bravery of thirteen French soldiers.—A detachment of French and Americans march to reconnoitre the works at New York.—General Washington.—Remarks upon the American Army.—Their military dress and manner of living.—Discipline.—Uncertainty of the object of the campaign.—Various opinions.—Improbability of success in attack upon New York.—Marquis de Lafayette and his army in Virginia.—A march to the southward not unlikely.—Camp at Phillipsburg, Aug 4th, 1781.

The chief object of our marching was to form a junction with the army of General Washington. This junction was effected at Phillipsburg. The Americans arrived there the same time we did, having been before entrenched upon the mountains of West Point that command the North River. The stream being very narrow in this part, the Americans have built forts upon each side, the batteries of which traverse each other. The fort upon the left side is situated upon a strip of land that runs out into the river, covered on the east by a marsh, and only open on the north. An army is there in a situation to repel an attack from a far superior force, and the batteries of the forts can prevent any vessel whatever from sailing farther up. This situation is the more important to the

Americans, as the English are at present masters of New York, and consequently command the entrance of the North River. As allies, we are encamped to the left of the Americans, and their right is extended upon the North River, as low as Dobbs Ferry ; our left is upon a little river called the Bronx. The position of both armies is upon considerable heights, and a deep valley separates us. We are not more than fifteen miles from New York ; but to get there, we should be under the necessity of marching down the whole length of the island, and traversing a country full of armed refugees. The French Army, ever since it began its march, had been parcelled out into distinct regiments ; but upon our approach to New York, it was reunited into a brigade. Being now necessitated to march in a single column, and having our baggage wagons drawn by oxen, our progress was proportionately slow and confused, the whole body occupying an extent of several miles. We had also to fear lest in these mountainous and woody regions parties of the enemy might come and fall upon our baggage and artillery, burn them, and hamstring the oxen and horses before we could have it in our power to relieve them. These losses, in our situation, would have been irreparable. The English, however, although greatly interested in preventing our joining the Americans, never made the least movement to hinder it. A march of two hundred and fifteen miles, through the most excessive heats, in a country very defective in supplies for an army where the soldier is very often in want of bread and is obliged to carry provisions for several days with him, has nevertheless made fewer invalids among us than if we had laid still in the garrison. It is true, the strict attention of the superior officers has greatly contributed thereto, in never suffering men to drink water except with a quantity of rum intermixed to take away its injurious qualities. Le Comte Saint-Maime, colonel commandant de Soissonais, always, at each halt, and at each place of encamping, sent out and purchased barrels of cider, which he caused to be distributed among his troops at a very low rate. His example was afterward followed by the other corps, and produced the happiest effects. The English, since our encamping with the Americans, have laid a plan to intercept the supplies we received from the back country by means of the North River. They sent up a twenty-gun frigate and some troops as far as Tarrytown, a village situated six miles upon the right flank of the rear of the army. Two hundred men made an attempt to land, and the first company that disembarked had time to set fire to some great gun carriages, to a bateau, and to take off another loaded with six thousand rations of bread ; but a sergeant of the regiment of Soissonais and twelve soldiers forced them to disembark, and even entered waist deep

into the water to pursue them, and hindered the rest from coming on shore. This first feat of the French arms in America gave the English some idea of what they were to expect from the united efforts of a whole corps. The commanding officers strove who would be foremost in bestowing praises upon these brave soldiers. "My general, (answered the sergeant to M. le Baron de Viomenil, who was extolling his bravery to the skies) I am indebted to the good advice and bravery of my corporal for what I have done, for he perfectly seconded my endeavors." Courage is not a rare virtue in France, but modesty is somewhat more so; and yet this was a pattern of the most perfect modesty in a circumstance very delicate for a soldier. I have, I assure you, heard a superior officer find fault with the encomiums that were given these men, and blame M. Le Baron de Viomenil for having afterwards invited them to dine with him. Can virtue ever be too much honored, or too well rewarded?

Batteries were erected in haste as low as Dobbs Ferry, and when the English frigate and troops came down, they had to sustain a very heavy cannonade. A shell from a mortar piece set the frigate's sails on fire, and terror and confusion seemed predominant among the crew, twenty-two of whom threw themselves overboard into the river, and were mostly drowned. General Washington having signified his intention of reconnoitering the fortifications of New York, two thousand French, and as many Americans, set out on their march to escort him; and at break of day found themselves within cannon-shot at the enemy's entrenchments. They remained there two days, while the English contented themselves with now and then firing a cannon and observing their motions at a distance. I have seen General Washington—that most singular man—the soul and the support of one of the greatest revolutions that has ever happened, or can happen again. I fixed my eyes upon him with that keen attention which the sight of a great man always inspires,—we naturally entertain a secret hope of discovering in these features of illustrious men some traces of the excellent genius which distinguishes them from, and elevates them above, their fellow mortals. Perhaps the exterior of no man was ever better calculated to gratify these expectations than that of General Washington. He is of a tall stature, well proportioned, a fine, cheerful, open countenance, a simple modest carriage; and his whole mien has something in it that interests the French, the Americans, and even his enemies themselves, in his favor. Placed in a military view at the head of a nation, where each individual has a share in the supreme legislative authority, and where the coercive laws are yet in a great degree destitute of vigor; where the

climate and manners can add but little to their energy ; where the spirit of party, private interest, slowness, and national indolence suspend and overthrow the best concerted measures ;—although so situated, he has found out a method of keeping his troops in the most absolute subordination : making them rivals in praising him, fearing him even when he is silent, and retaining their full confidence in him after defeats and disgrace. His reputation has at length arrived to a most brilliant pitch, and he may now grasp at the most unbounded power, without provoking envy or exciting suspicions. He has ever shown himself superior to fortune, and in the most trying adversity has discovered resources till then unknown. And if his abilities only increased and dilated at the prospect of difficulty, he is never better supplied than when he seems destitute of everything ; nor have his arms ever been so fatal to his enemies as at the very instant they thought they had crushed him forever. It is his to excite a spirit of heroism and enthusiasm in a people who are by nature very little susceptible of it ; to gain over the respect and homage of those whose interest it is to refuse it ; and to execute his plans and projects by means unknown even to those who are the instruments. He is intrepid in dangers ; yet never seeks them but when the good of his country demands it, preferring rather to temporize and act upon the defensive, because he knows such a mode of conduct best suits the genius and circumstances of his nation, and thus all he and they have to expect depends upon time, fortitude, and patience. He is frugal and sober with regard to himself, but profuse in the public cause ; like Peter the Great, he has by defeats conducted his army to victory, and like Fabius, but with fewer resources and more difficulty, he has conquered without fighting, and saved his country. Such are the ideas that arise in the mind at the sight of this great man, in examining the events in which he has had a share, or in listening to those whose duty obliges them to be near his person, and can consequently display his true character. In all these extensive states, they consider him in the light of a beneficent god, dispensing peace and happiness around him. Old men, women, and children press about him when he accidentally passes along, and think themselves happy, once in their lives to have seen him. They follow him through the towns with torches, and celebrate his arrival with public illuminations. The Americans, that cool and sedate people, who in the midst of their most trying difficulties have attended only to the directions and impulses of plain method and common reason, are roused, animated, and inflamed at the very mention of his name ; and the first songs that sentiment or gratitude has dictated, have been to celebrate General Washington. It is uncertain how

many men his army consists of exactly. Some say only four or five thousand; but this general has always found means to conceal the real number from even those who compose it. Sometimes, with a few, he forms a spacious camp, and increases the number of tents; at other times, with a great number, he contracts it to a narrow compass; then, again, by detaching them insensibly, the whole camp is nothing more than the mere skeleton and shadow of an army, while the main body is transported to a distant part of the country. Neither do these troops, in general, wear regular uniforms; but the officers and corps of artillery are obliged, without exception, to such distinction. Several regiments have small white frocks with fringes, which look well enough; also linen overalls, large and full, which are very convenient in hot weather, and do not at all hinder the free use of the limbs in marching. With food less substantial and a constitution of body less vigorous than our people, they are better able to support fatigue, and perhaps for that very reason. This advantage in dress, I believe, has not been sufficiently considered. In France, we are apt to consult the gratification of the eye too far, and forget that troops are designed to act and not merely to show themselves and their finery. The most proper apparel would be that which, being as little burdensome as possible, would cover the soldier best and incommode him the least. The regiment of Soissonais has, in all this tedious march, had the fewest stragglers and sick of any other. One of the principal causes was, without doubt, the precaution of the colonel, who, on purpose for the campaign, had linen breeches made for his regiment. The American military habit, although easy to be soiled, is nevertheless decent and neat. This neatness is particularly observable among the officers. To see them, you would suppose they were equipped with every necessary in the completest manner; and yet upon entering their tents, where perhaps three or four reside together, I have often been astonished to find that their whole travelling equipage would not weigh forty pounds. Few or none have mattresses—a single rug or blanket stretched out upon the rough bark of a tree serves them for a bed. The soldiers take the same precaution never to sleep on the ground, whilst ours prefer it to any other way. Their manner of living is very simple, and gives them but little trouble. They content themselves with broiling their meat and parching their corn, or breaking unleavened dough made of Indian meal upon the embers. In some regiments they have negro companies, but always commanded by the whites. Their discipline is exceedingly severe, and the power of the officers over the soldiers is almost unlimited, lashing them with whips, and beating them with canes for the slightest faults. I, with some French officers,

was accidentally a witness to their vigorous mode of chastisement. The criminal was tied to the wheels of a cannon carriage, his shoulders naked, his arms stretched out in order to give the muscles their greatest tension, and in this situation every soldier of the company came up and gave him a certain number of strokes with a large whip, which soon covered him with blood. What astonished us, and detained us the longer at this disagreeable spectacle, was that two of the unhappy culprits, who both suffered the same degree of punishment, never uttered the least groan or complaint, or showed any signs of fear. Is this courage, or is the natural sensibility of mankind less acute among a people where the air of the forest and the constant usage of tea and milk soften and relax the fibres to a most astonishing degree? Notwithstanding the actual appearance of our generals before New York, the object of the present campaign remains very uncertain. Some say the Americans are tired of the war, and discontented with our inactivity, and for that reason the French Army has joined them solely to reanimate their drooping courage. It is also reported since the defection of Arnold, General Washington, not altogether satisfied with the fidelity of his army, has come to the resolution of trusting the important post of West Point to the French. The views of this general, in my opinion, extend further than all this. We have just learnt that M. de Barras, commander of our squadron at Rhode Island, has received some tidings of M. de Grasse, and has sent him a frigate with a number of pilots on board for these coasts. This looks as if New York was their object. That island and city is at present the general storehouse of the English, and the centre of their operations. The possession of this place enables them to hold an easy communication with their territories to the north and south, and at the same time to menace the interior parts of the adjacent country by means of Hudson's River; also prevent the forces of the north-eastern states from advancing to the southward; it is also a sure receptacle for their fleets, where they can plan and prepare for their offensive operations in the West India Islands.

The capture of this place would be a decisive stroke; and from the moment such an event takes place, the English must forever renounce the hope of subjecting the states; and in their present exhausted situation, I do not see how they would repair the loss of the stores and the troops. Charleston and Savannah having to oppose the whole impression and strength of the American continental forces, would make but a poor defense; and the West India Islands, still more difficult to be relieved by timely assistance, would be entirely at the mercy of the enemy. And on the other hand, New York is well fortified and defended both by land and water, and



the fortifications very extensive. It is besides garrisoned by the troops of Great Britain, amounting to fifteen thousand men, including the troops raised in the country, so that to lay siege to New York there would be wanting, besides a supernumery force, at least thirty thousand men; whereas, our combined army does not amount to more than ten thousand. It is true the militia of the country may be collected, but these are nothing more than undisciplined troops, the duration of whose services is always limited. And what could such do against regular forces well intrenched, and inured to all the hardships and dangers of war for six or seven campaigns? Even the French Army, however brave and well disciplined it may be, is composed of troops, very few of whom have ever been actually in battle. At any rate, a siege of this place would be long and tedious; and as to the squadron of M. de Grasse, we know it cannot leave the West India Islands till the hurricane season comes on, and can only remain here during that season. Otherwise his projected operations in those seas would fail, and our possessions be exposed to the enemy. If, on the other hand, this important expedition should fail, all would be ruined: the Americans, exhausted and discouraged at the revolt of Arnold, panting after repose, and viewing us in the light of a feeble ally, would lose courage, turn their views towards peace, and perhaps purchase it at any price whatsoever. The South is probably the real object of this campaign. Those states have for a long time past felt all the miseries of war, and have been wasted alternately by friends and enemies. Virginia has been the scene of cruelties and devastations of Arnold; and Cornwallis, disquieted at the news of our marching, has quitted Charleston and traversed with a large body of troops the Carolinas and Virginia; at the same time plundering the settlements, kidnapping the negroes, and spreading death and devastation wherever he happened to march. So many repeated distresses and losses have discouraged the inhabitants, and inclined them to do anything at all to better their situation. The arrival of our army can alone free them from oppression and revive their courage. A certain warrior, Marquis de Lafayette, at the head of twelve or fifteen hundred men, has nevertheless found means to keep his ground all this time in Virginia—the impetuous Arnold and the active Cornwallis not daring to attempt anything against him. You will doubtless suppose that this warrior is one of those men whose long experience and brilliant success have rendered them formidable to the enemy. This leader, I assure you, is a man of only twenty-four years of age, who has left an affectionate and amiable wife—where his name and an alliance with an illustrious family opened a way to the greatest

dignities—to come to this country, and under the American Fabius, defend the sacred cause of liberty and learn to serve his king and country. The word marquis, which has been so long used among us to characterize foppish fickleness and levity, universally excites admiration and gratitude at the very mention of it throughout the American world. A southern expedition would be less hazardous in its nature, and less decisive in its effects, than here, but more pressing upon the enemy, and promising a more certain prospect of success. We have intelligence that the Lord Cornwallis is fortifying at York, a small town in Virginia, situated upon a river of the same name. The news begins to elevate the spirits of the French, who, if they could once hear of the arrival of M. de Grasse, would conclude that this company would not yet go over without some considerable events. Several of our officers employed their leisure time last winter, in making a tour to the southward. One of them, M. de Saint Victor, captain in the regiment of Soissonais, and well known to be very skillful in every particular that regards his profession as a soldier, and who did not make this tour without reaping considerable advantage from it, has viewed York, and judges it incapable of being fortified to any great purpose, being destitute of all opening for a retreat; for, having a squadron that could command Chesapeake Bay, in his opinion, we could soon bring the enemy to what terms we pleased. It is difficult, however, to persuade one's self that Cornwallis, who knows the country so well, and has acquired so much reputation in this war, and who is by no means ignorant of the notion of our enemies, would pitch upon such a situation, without he was convinced it would every way answer his purposes. An enemy is oftentimes never more to be dreaded than when he appears to give advantages over him. The season being pretty well advanced, we cannot remain much longer in a state of uncertainty. In my next letter, I hope I shall be able to give you an account of matters with a greater degree of precision.

I am, &c.

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LETTER IV. New York menaced by the allied army on the side of Kingsbridge and Staten Island.—The possession of this island absolutely necessary, before any attempt can be made on Long Island or New York.—Ardour of the troops for action. Camp at Phillipsburg, Aug 15, 1781.—General Washington and Count Rochambeau passed the North River a few days ago, and have ever since been reconnoitering.—They who supposed we were to direct our route towards Virginia, begin now to think they were deceived: part of the army, on this side, are preparing to march

down by way of Kingsbridge; and on the other side, orders are given to get ready to proceed towards Staten Island, and even to construct ovens to bake bread for the troops, when camped in that quarter; others, again, are ordered towards Philadelphia. What are we to think? All this seems to me like our theatrical marches, where the concern and perplexity of the spectators is continually increasing. I am in doubt whether the unravelling of the matter will compensate for the trouble, anxiety, and uneasiness it occasions. Staten Island, they say, is garrisoned by eight or nine hundred regular forces, so that the capture of it would be a most brilliant affair. It is separated from Long Island only by a strait of two or three miles over; and our being such near neighbors would perplex the English greatly, and put us in a situation to attempt something upon the larger island, with a better prospect of success. Our troops are full of ardor and confidence, and the several commanders seem calculated by nature to inspire them with a spirit of boldness and enterprise. General Washington, in particular, animates them by his presence, by the idea they have of his military talents, by his local knowledge of the country, and by that impenetrable veil of secrecy under which he resolves and matures all his great designs. It is said the armies will move in a day or two, which will enable us to determine the better to what quarter we are to proceed.

I am, &c.

PRINCETON, SEPT., 1781.

LETTER V.—The main body of the army returns to North Castle.—The author lost in the woods, and in great danger from the refugees.—The combined forces march into the Jerseys.—Staten Island threatened with a descent.—Surprising inactivity of the English at New York.—An expedition to Virginia; the real object of the army.—General view of New Jersey.—Character of the people.—The army arrives at Princeton.

At length, sir, I can inform you that the army left Phillipsburg, the 19th of last month, and having made a retrograde movement, returned to North Castle, twenty-two miles distant. A heavy rain rendered this march disagreeable, for instead of reaching that place at ten or eleven in the morning, as we expected, we did not arrive till eight o'clock the next day; both officers and soldiers having spent the night in the roads, in the most dismal weather, and water half-leg deep. Neither was I exempt from the general misfortune, for I had imprudently advanced, unaccompanied, miles before the army, and got into a road infested with refugees (who never grant quarter to a Frenchman), where a domestic of mine escaped from

them very narrowly, and had he not been armed, would doubtless have lost his life. They have lately hanged a secretary belonging to one of our commissioners, and assassinated an officer of the Legion of Lauzun; so that I will confess to you, when I found myself alone and defenceless in those woods, I was in dread of adding to the number of those who had fallen victims to the resentment of these enemies of republicanism. Yet I had the good fortune to arrive safe at the camp, having passed the night without tents or shelter of any sort, stretched out by a large fire, roasting on one side and half drowned on the other,—and even found means to sleep several hours. How many of you rich sluggards, under gilt ceilings and upon your beds of down, have not been able to do as much! The inhabitants of the country were greatly surprised to see us returning the same road, so poor, and the Tories, with a malicious sneer, demanded if we were going to rest from our labours; but it was not long before they discovered the feint. We were now advanced considerably up the North River, and in three days were as high as King's Ferry; but the Americans having travelled along the river side, had arrived there before us. Some have alleged that if the English had sent some armed vessels up the Hudson, they might have retarded us considerably, and have done us infinite mischief. The retrograde march that we made by order of General Washington, was doubtless meant to divert them from this attempt; but nevertheless after the trial they had of the abilities of our artillerymen, they must have known they would run a great risk of having their vessels destroyed, especially if they had met with calms or contrary winds. The allied army has passed a great part of the State of New Jersey, drawing a large quantity of batteries with them upon carriages, and always menacing Staten Island.

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